

IT'S A RACE WITH NO FINISH LINE— BUT WITH GREAT REWARDS

No matter what your goals are, in your life and your business, it's critical to be relentlessly committed to achieving your goals. If you're an athlete, it might mean occasionally training till you're exhausted. If you're a performer, it will mean endless repetition. And if you're a business owner or leader, it absolutely should mean doing everything you can to provide exceptional customer service.

Most companies don't make a solid commitment to providing service that is so awesome, it keeps their current customers coming back and draws new customers through positive word-of-mouth. Too often, businesses aren't relentlessly focused on driving their success with excellent customer service.

What does it mean to be relentless? It means being obsessed with giving the customer the best possible service you can. It means that you're passionate to learn, improve, and exceed your customers' expectations. Like breathing, relentless excellence in customer service is essential if you want to keep your business healthy and thriving. Excellent customer service reflects the core beliefs and attitudes of the people who run the world's healthiest and most successful businesses.

Being relentless requires following two simple rules: (1) Serve the customer, and (2) When in doubt, see number (1).

When you're relentless, you weave customer service into the very fabric of your company. You make it a central part of your culture. It can't just be a flavor of the week. It requires a constant, continuous, ongoing dedication to providing the customers with such extraordinary service that they are inspired to return, and to praise you to their friends.

Executives of publicly held companies may wax indignant over what I'm saying: "Shareholder value should always come first!" But shareholder value derives from providing a good return on investment, and great returns don't happen without the people who buy your products or services. When you give them awesome customer service, you'll win your market and drive your business to ever-greater heights. It's a win-win for your investors, and for you.

The commitment to being relentless starts at the top. It must then be instilled in every employee until it becomes a shared belief that defines your brand. You must recognize that serving the customer is every employee's most important task, at every level. It's a belief that must be reflected in every decision and action you take.

Every employee will need to be trained in relentlessly providing exceptional customer service, and the training must be regularly refreshed. Let your employees know what you expect of them, and set a good example by your own actions.

You'll never rise to the top of your market without a great team – a merely good team will be left behind. Just as young athletes look to the pros as role models, you should study businesses that are wildly successful and profitable because of their customer service. Here are a few I recommend you look at: Mayo Clinic, Amazon, Wilderness Safaris, Chewy.com, K-VA-T & Food City, and Northeast Delta Dental. What are they doing that you can incorporate in your organization?

At every level and in every role of your company, ask: "How did my work today support and serve the customer?" Relentlessly serving your customers will build your bottom line and raise your long-term growth prospects. Whatever your business, it's critical to recognize that the customers provide your income stream. To keep it flowing, keep the customers happy – put their needs at the forefront of everything you do.

Visit www.customer-service.com for more information on John Tschohl and the Service Quality Institute.

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John Tschohl is the founder and president of Service Quality Institute, a global leader in customer service. He is considered one of the world's foremost authorities on all aspects of customer service, and is the author of several books including Moving Up: A Step-by-Step Guide to Creating Your Success. His monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no cost at www.customer-service.com.

